

Japan Christian Activity News

PUBLISHED
BY NCCJ

Property of
Graduate Theological Union

ISSN: 0021-4353

SEP 6 1989

#669 AUGUST, 1989

PEOPLE'S PLAN FOR THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

An unprecedented international program was carried out during the month of August on the Japanese archipelago, north from Hokkaido to the south in Okinawa - People's Plan for the 21st Century (PP21).

PP21 is a program developed to offer an opportunity for representatives from grassroots people's movements and organizations in Japan and other Asian-Pacific countries to gather and reflect on the situation in the Asia region and to work toward a joint alternative vision for the 21st century - a new model of development and new concept of progress based upon a people-based vision.

The National Christian Council in Japan, Christian Conference of Asia and the World Council of Churches all joined in supporting this program; with the NCC/J as a co-supporting organization.

PP21 was originally proposed by the Pacific Asia Resource Center (PARC), an action-oriented research, education, and documentation center. The project was then undertaken by the initiatives of community based and other grass roots action groups and movements in Japan.

As the 20th century is coming to a close the "ongoing process of economic, political, and cultural integration of the region by transnational business and internationally coalesced power elites" is a process that threatens all of us. In the name of business interests

ancient rain forests are leveled "wiping out old ways of living and forcing people into new ones; heaping desperate people around the edges of exploding cities, piling up unprecedented wealth in the hands of a few, while leaving the many in unprecedented forms of poverty, with a cultural and spiritual wasteland in its trail."

"The world's fastest growing region is thus being shaped in pace with the waning strength of the U.S. as the custodian of Pax Americana, and the enormous expansion of the Japanese economy leading to Asian-Pacific integration under the aegis of the U.S.-Japan alliance."

Japan now has the highest per capita GNP in the world, and tops the list for foreign investments, trade surplus, and in annual overseas economic aid. Japanese business ventures have extended to all continents, developing production bases catering to Japanese markets, buying real estate, gaining control of banking systems. Not surprisingly, Japan is one of South Africa's top trading partners.

This is the situation as we approach the end of the 20th century. And it is not enough to deny, reject or protest against this state of affairs - which does not ensure a clear alternative - a more humanistic alternative must be determinedly sought.

THE PROGRAM

The program consists of a series of inter-connected, international consultations, cultural events, and local gatherings of people's movements taking place throughout the peninsula and dealing with major issues of concern

NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL Room 24, 2-3-18 Nishiwaseda, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160 Japan

NOTE: Permission to reprint is granted to all media provided that credit is given and a copy is sent to the editors.

to the region: Militarism, Migrant Workers, Indigenous People and Minorities, Workers, Women, Agriculture, ODA (Overseas Development Assistance), International Relations, and Control and Human Rights.

The summing-up segment of PP21 was part of the Minamata gathering. Minamata is a symbol of industrial pollution in Japan. Tragically famous for the industrial mercury poisoning (Minamata Disease) and the people's struggle against the Chisso Fertilizer Company and the Japanese Government.

SUMMING UP

The Minamata Gathering was slated to be the synthesis of all that came out of the preceding conferences and events and a review and analysis of the oppression and contradictions which exist in the world. Based upon the aspirations of the people, a Minamata Declaration was produced, presenting the "people's alternatives" for the Asia-Pacific region and recommended actions toward this goal: "The slogan at the beginning of the 20th century was progress. The cry at the end of the 20th century is survival. The call for the next century is hope. Impelled by that hope for the future and with a keen sense of urgency, we began our concluding gathering of the People's Plan for the 21st Century."

The declaration went on to assert: "The present system has begun to undermine itself by creating its own contradictions: growth against nature, militarism against need for collective security, uniformity against cultural diversity, alienation against human dignity, mindless consumerism against humankind aspiring to regain lost values, meaning and spirituality."

These contradictions are pushing forward new historical subjects, from amongst the victims of the global catastrophe. The mushrooming of people's movements are giving rise to the hope that we can create a society where everyone can live with dignity."

The simultaneous emergence of this global phenomenon has its own

commonalities: common interests, common values and common threats organically linking all oppressed people and exploited groups in the world. A new logic is emerging against the logic of growth, transnational companies and elitist power. This is the true 'logic of the majority.' The 'majority' here does not mean the majority as measured in polls and elections, but the global majority, the most oppressed. It means that they must have the prerogative, and this requires a new set of priorities based on human values and in harmony with nature, culture, gender, indigenous people and other ethnic groups.

A new internationalism is being born out of these local, national, regional popular struggles confronting common enemies. These new movements are growing up within the context of a peculiar contradiction involving the role of the state. Our region is being organized by transnational capital, which is bringing together far-flung and heterogeneous areas and peoples into an integrated, hierarchical division of labor, in which peasants, workers, indigenous peoples and women are subordinated. States are vigorously promoting this, as the agencies which mediate the entry of transnational capital within their national boundaries. At the same time, transnationalization of the economy undermines the basis of the state. This displaces its claim to sovereignty and legitimacy, and creates new opportunities for the people to intervene. The state seeks to protect itself through intensification of repression and violence, as we see today in many countries, including China, or, as in the case of Japan, intensification of the attempt to implant statist ideology into the minds of the people.

In this same process, the engine of development has heated in Japan and is running wildly out of control, producing a saturation economy. The Japanese work intensely in heavily managed situations in which they are virtually powerless. The Japanese economy does not empower its citizens, but rather seeks to make them powerless and fragmented. And it has also reproduced within its

boundaries a 'North' and a 'South.' The 'South' includes millions of poorly paid women part-timers, contract workers, day laborers, and increasing guest workers from South and Southeast Asia as well as farmers who are rapidly being marginalized.

One of the words which has been stolen from the people and corrupted is the word "democracy." Originally, democracy meant the autonomy, the self-determination, the empowerment of the people. To many people in the Third World, however, it has come to be the label for a facade of "civilian government," disguising state terror and repression in a ploy to claim legitimacy for the state to serve the interests of the powerful. For indigenous peoples and other minorities, democracy has been the ideology of "majority rule" that has defined them as "minorities" who could be legitimately ignored.

At the same time, democracy is something millions of people in the Asia-Pacific region, including China, are fighting and dying for. We need to retrieve it to serve the people's struggle. We must begin with the premise that the state, and the institutions that it pretends constitute 'democracy,' cannot be relied on to bring us peace, justice, secure and dignified life, or an end to ecological destruction. Only the people's movements themselves, independent and autonomous, can do this.

-PEOPLE'S RIGHTS-

Hence, we declare that the oppressed people have a natural and universal right to criticize, oppose, or prevent the implementation of decisions affecting their lives, no matter where those decisions are made. We declare that this right, as a people's right, is more fundamental than any artificial law or institution established by the state. We declare that this right means the right of the people to cross all borders, national and social, to carry their struggle to the exact sources of power seeking to dominate or destroy them.

We need to make clear that this right

must never be interpreted as justifying the actions of the powerful crossing borders to oppress, exploit and dispossess the people. On the contrary, we are asserting that the people have a right to counter these interventions which are going on all the time.

We recognize that the struggles of subjugated peoples to establish their own governments, or of people to change or improve their governments, are crucial. At the same time, we believe that, in the long-term, it is such political actions of the people, marginalizing states and countering the power of international capital, that will produce the 21st century that we hope for.

We have no illusions about the present condition of the peoples of the Asia-Pacific region. The ruling powers maintain themselves by dividing the people and encouraging hostility among them. The rulers not only seek to rule us, but also to manage our mutual relations, depriving us of our right to do this for ourselves. This we must reject and overcome. Trans-border political action, support and solidarity campaigns across borders will gradually develop a new "people", that transcends existing divisions, especially between people living in the North and South.

This is not utopian: the actions we describe are actually going on all over the Asia-Pacific region, and all over the world. What we assert is that these trans-border actions are not merely the proper responses of the people to desperate situations. Taken together, they amount to the people collectively making their own 21st century.

SOLIDARITY FOR HOPE
-SOUTH AFRICA-

Three women from South Africa were invited to Japan by the Niwano Peace Foundation, The Japan Anti-apartheid Committee, and the NCC/J. They travelled in Japan for 20 days in order to exchange opinions about life and hope

for women and children and raise awareness and concerns for the apartheid generated conditions in South Africa.

Miriam Tlali from Johannesburg, whose books were translated into Japanese, appealed to the people about the problem of censorship in South Africa. She said that the problem is that women are not able to publish without a husband's signature. The publishing companies are not interested in stories of Blacks in South Africa. Like her book, *Soweto Stories* (Pandora Press, London) and others, even if the books are published, no Blacks are able to buy them. She said that writers in South Africa are not allowed even to dream and the creativity of Blacks is drying out.

Recognizing the importance of dramatization of her stories for people, she wants to have enough time to learn technical aspects as well as the time to dream for more of her literary works. She explained that for Black women there are three layers of oppression: race, sex, and White women. The White majority are Christians whose beliefs are based on an artificial authority to control Blacks through concepts of White supremacy.

Elizabeth Mokotong from the Pretoria NCC dealt with Christian Women's Movements for justice and peace as based in the churches. The present school system for Blacks aims at the creation of cheap labor for South Africa. The educational level is kept low and children who request equality in education have been arrested and killed. Using the church buildings women are trying to teach children how to live with love in this antagonistically violent environment. The purpose of children's education is to nurture for leadership in the post-apartheid era.

The volume containing voices from prison cells, entitled "Woman's Place Is In The Struggle, Not Behind Bars" was translated into Japanese. The cries for freedom in the struggle for ending of the apartheid system are presented in this work and commitment is sought for creating a just society.

Ending the hot summer program in Japan the South African women left with the promise that this is the beginning of solidarity in action for the creation of a free society for all.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE HANDICAPPED

by Muneharu Nishimoto

Several months after birth my left arm had to be amputated. On August 6, 1945 I experienced the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. A few years later, when I was 10 years old, my spinal column took on an unusual curvature. The doctor could not discover the cause, but diagnosed the problem as an idiopathic spinal cord refraction. Recently the doctor said my physical problem is suspiciously similar to the effects seen in atomic bomb victims.

I went to ordinary schools, not to special schools for handicapped children. I have been working now at an office of the Japan Lutheran Church. For several years my health was not so good so I asked my doctor friend for a closer examination. After learning the results of all the examinations the doctor said that I should be very sick and surviving in bed.

Because of my spinal cord anomaly my lungs are not functioning well and medically the capacity of my lungs is not great enough to send the needed compliment of oxygen into my blood stream. It was to the doctor's amazement that such a small amount of oxygen seems to provide adequate functioning for my body. He was surprised that a person with such a low oxygen count could even remain alive.

I was shocked by his comment, for I knew I was not healthy, but I did not realize my health examination would indicate such poor data in every respect. At the same time my life goes on within a body that the doctors can not believe possible on the basis of my medical history. I am convinced that my life is

being sustained by God. I have deepened my appreciation of God's sustaining care ever more and more. When, however, I tell people that I am employed, the standard response is to praise the magnanimous nature of the person employing me.

I have wondered often as to who makes the decision relative to which persons are to be labeled handicapped and which persons are said to be normal. God created various people on this earth. There are no two people alike. There are no two persons with the same talents and abilities. However, some are called handicapped and as a result are the victims of discrimination.

Human beings have set these standards based on their own convenience saying that the handicapped are those people who are basically not able to remain in stride with the common and normal standards of present social structures. Those people who are powerful, label those who are weak, handicapped. There are people of impairment who cannot see and who cannot hear. Because of the impairment they are disabled. But why does this handicap become the basis of discrimination against them? I believe that the problem exists in the present ability preeminence based value system.

When I was little I did not think I was handicapped. Of course it would not be the truth to say that did not have any inconvenience in my daily life, but I could cover for the disability in my own ways. However, when I went to junior and senior high schools, and then to theological seminary, and when I extended my relationships within wider circles in society in order to obtain a job, the physical and psychological walls grew thicker and higher. If I have to follow the ways of the majority instead of my own way, the disability becomes a greater handicap. If I could not perform in the manner expected in physical education classes I was not given credit and could not graduate. Such people are not able to endure school.

The church in which I was baptized practiced immersion. The baptism

required that we should go into the water in the worship center wearing very thin clothes. Because my parents did not allow me to take off my clothes in front of others I could not endure being covered only by a very thin cloth in church. I requested the pastor to find another way to baptize me. I imagine I trusted my pastor as one who would understand my position as I could not explain why I did not wish immersion. The pastor accused me of unfaithfulness and said that unless I immersed myself in the water I could not wash off all my sins.

Later on I learned from Martin Luther that the importance of baptism is in God's words along with the use of water and the crux of the matter is not the amount of water involved. Then I met a minister who was blind and received baptism from him. However, I could not help feeling shame in relation to my own body.

When I entered theological seminary I lived in the dormitory. There was no bath in the dormitory and all students went to the public bath house. I was puzzling as to whether or not I could ask one of the professors who had a bath at home to let me use it. Then one of my friends who had a leg problem asked me to go to the public bath with him. He said, "Be courageous." I was very hesitant the first time. He took me to the bath house. I can not remember how I took my own clothes off and washed myself. But my friend said the first time is the most difficult but once one gets over the barrier one can get rid of the hesitation. I learned from a man who did not have his right hand how to wash myself using only one arm. I learned to tie a necktie with one arm and use a typewriter from a student from India who had a paralyzed right arm. I grew up with parents who overprotected me in order that I not feel too great an inconvenience in daily life but now I was living in a dormitory. I had to wash and iron by myself and found out that I could do almost everything without help.

There is a person I know who is not free to use his hands but must use his feet

for eating. This person can eat like all other persons. If eating is to be accomplished only with hands and said procedure absolutized by the social norm, then this person would not be able to eat and would be labeled handicapped in the extreme.

If said person understands eating by using ones feet to be a shameful act, then that person labels himself as handicapped in society. It is a reality that persons with and without disabilities are living together in community and some are labeled handicapped.

Although I graduated from theological seminary I was not given a chance to apply for the ordination examination because the church leaders think that handicapped persons are not suited to pastoral roles. The Bible says that Jesus was born weak, and for the sake of the weak. But the church venerates a powerful Jesus as its role model.

The following are examples of tactless presentations made by pastors in Christian meetings for and with handicapped people.

"When I am with handicapped people I do not feel at ease but rather am full of apology, for I have been given such a fine body, while others are burdened with various handicaps. Only your prayers for our work are of great service to us. I hope that you will pray."

"I learned that God's wonderful blessings are given through one's handicapped disabilities. I envy you. I feel regret in that I was not born handicapped."

A pastor using crutches said in the worship service, "I am sorry that I have to show my miserable ugliness in the use of crutches. Soon my crutches will be taken away."

Another example is from a pastor who is himself handicapped but nevertheless preached a sermon using John 9:3 "...that the works of God might be made manifest in him (blind man)....." On

the basis of this passage this same pastor went on to say "Even though you have a handicap you should not be defeated by physically normal people. You should not feel inferior. As manifesting God's glory use the disability as a weapon and act with equality in relation to normal persons. If normal persons treat you unjustly you should endure it remembering the Cross of Jesus and live with a smile as a handicapped person. You should not allow yourself to be disliked by others but give a good impression. God will not forget the handicapped, for handicapped people are to be a vessel manifesting God's glory."

What is the meaning of being a physically and mentally disabled or handicapped person? The Bible does not teach that the disabled should make efforts to climb up to the level of normal people. The Bible does not indicate which is the main limb and which are the branches, nor does it say who are primary and who are secondary. Whether individuals have disabilities or not, all of us are equal human beings before God.

Looking back on my life it seems that only those people who have endured disabilities have helped me and taught me. There are things which only the handicapped can teach. Those who have disabilities and those who are not handicapped should retain valued roles within every human context, but there should be no hierarchy of values which locates some as being superior to others. I believe that each life should be cared for and the variety of differences should create a richness for the church and society.

The Japanese government has not taken full responsibility for the atomic bomb victims. We are asking for state compensations for atomic bomb victims. Japan has never clarified its war responsibilities to other Asian countries, and Japan's expansion of its military power today will become a threat again. Legalization of a relief system for atom bomb victims would be a true expression of the nation's contrite denunciation of war.

ORDINATION OF WOMEN THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE

KCC/J Ordains its First Second Generation Korean Woman

Suh Jeong Soon was ordained in June as a minister of the Korean Christian Church in Japan. The Rev. Suh is a second-generation Korean born in Japan, and only the second woman to be ordained by the KCC/J.

Rev. Suh feels that it is the role of the church to speak to the Koreans in Japan in the midst of their painful struggle for acceptance, for basic human rights, and for a future of hope for their children.

She is eager to work on issues faced by Korean women in Japan, as they seek mature relationships with the men in their lives. She feels that Women pastors and the (KCC/J) Women's Association have an important role to play, to enable women to stretch their minds, to develop and use their God-given gifts in the wider community. Explaining that once a woman has shown the desire to pursue higher studies, whether theological or other, she should be given as much support and encouragement as a man would receive.

She hopes that Korean Christian Women will serve their people, so that they might be seen with new eyes by the male members of the church, adding that opportunities for, group study and leadership development are needed so that women can prepare for new roles. "Perhaps most of all" she added, "we need greater vision as to what is possible."

WOMEN IN POLITICS

After the July 23 Upper House election in Japan, Ms. Takako Doi, the chairperson of Japan Socialist Party felt that the "mountain moving" day had come to politics. In this Upper House election, 22 women were brought into office. Among them eleven are associated with the JSP, while the Liberal Democratic Party supported two.

Among the characteristics of the election which need emphasis are the fact that many homemakers worked in the election campaign. Ms. Haremi Inui was elected from Tokushima Prefecture and her campaign chief was a seventy-two year old woman who commented that the campaign supporters were all homemakers who had never been involved in political campaigns before. The chief campaign manager for Ms. Ruriko Nishioka, Kochi Prefecture, was sixty-two years old. She said, "Women who have stayed at home and worked in the shadows of their husbands, came out to the front lines for this election."

Before the Upper House election there were elections to city councils. In these cases also, women office holders increased. In 1986 nationwide, the number of women council members was around 30 and in 1987 the number went up to 64. In July of 1989, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government election brought 17 women to the governing council and made the deputy moderator a woman. These results brought the creation of 74 women office holders (30 JSP and 6 LDP) serving in city councils across Japan.

The awareness and concerns of women have been nurtured through involvement in consumer and anti-nuclear power plant movements. When women increase their participation in politics they convince themselves that there is hope for changing the present social situation.

More women came to oppose the Liberal Democratic Party which had instituted the unpopular consumption tax and had been involved in illegal money scandals. Prime Minister Uno's sex scandal was delved into in Diet sessions by Upper House representative Ms. Kubota. Mr. Uno did not respond to her questioning but ignored the inquiry. Many women's

groups protested against the immorality of politicians.

Ms. Doi appealed to women saying that the long era of male domination in politics had created a tendency to increase the hunger for raw power and encourage corruption in politics. She contends that when injustice has so deeply permeated society, women must place greater emphasis on the value and importance of humanity and on the life of all people. Ms. Doi emphasized in her political campaign that politics will change when women change.

Ms. Doi was nominated to the office of Prime Minister by an opposition coalition of the Upper House. However, in the Lower House, which the LDP still controls, Mr. Kaifu was elected Prime Minister. Just two weeks after choosing a new Kaifu administration cabinet, once again Mr. Yamashita, Chief Cabinet secretary, was forced to resign when a three-year extra-marital affair was reported in a popular culture magazine. The LDP members tried to create conditions whereby Mr. Yamashita would not have to resign from the post by commenting that if Yamashita must resign because of such a small matter, then there is no one who can assume a cabinet post.

Mr. Kaifu, who appointed to his cabinet certain so-called clean cabinet members found it necessary on August 25th, just before a planned trip to Washington DC, to swap the Chief Cabinet Secretary out of his position in favor of Ms. Moriyama, who had been chosen the Environment Minister.

In the meantime, Ms. Doi is trying to form an opposition coalition with the Komeito (Clean Government Party), the Democratic Socialist Party, and the Shaminren as Japan looks forward to the coming elections for the Lower House.

IN PROTEST OF PACEX

On August 21 the six delegates of the NCC Peace Committee and citizens groups went to see the Chief of the Self-Defense Forces, Mr. Matsumoto, in order to protest once again against PACEX.

Their statement reads, "On July 19 we made clear our protest of PACEX89. (See JCAN July). However we were not made privy to any opinions of the SDF establishment when we visited the headquarters office. The answer to our inquiry was that the SDF had not received any US requests on PACEX.

However, on August 7 the newspapers contained announcements of PACEX89 in which the designated aims of PACEX were reported to be exercises with US command and control of weapons to discover their durability and inter-operability.

Furthermore the report indicated that the SDF had been requested to join in the military exercise a long time ago. This means that the SDF should have known about PACEX89 when the previous protest was brought.

The emphasis of the protest is on the manner of SDF involvement in PACEX. The official report indicates that the SDF will have a separate military exercise with another country during the period of the US PACEX. This means that the SDF is actually joining in PACEX, yet the SDF attempts to avoid criticism of the illegality of joining in the military exercise. The USA is preparing conditions so that the SDF may escape from Japanese laws which prohibit Japan's participation in military acts.

The SDF does everything in its power to close what should be open discussions on whether or not the SDF should participate in PACEX relative to Japan's security needs. This issue should be discussed in the Diet sessions and be decided through said deliberations.

JCAN Editorial Staff: Munetoshi Maejima,
Liann Ainsworth, Aiko Carter
Technical Assistance: Anthony Carter
